

Life and times of Hobart Founder

The essay below was written in the early 1930's by William Earle, grandson of the man who founded Hobart and Lake Station. It appeared in Vol. XI of *The History of Lake County*, and is reprinted here with permission of the Lake County, Indiana Historical Society.

By William Earle

One of the noted characters of Lake County, in the early history of the same, was George Earle who came from Falmouth, England to America in the year 1833, having taken a contract in England to build some brick buildings in Philadelphia.

While engaged in the construction of these buildings, he became acquainted with a Mr. Davis, a mill man, who interested him in the wonderful country of the west, called Indiana, and on completion of the buildings they both came west to Lake County, then called Porter County, and, seeing the natural advantages of this country, returned to Philadelphia, closed up their business, and in the fall of 1836 George Earle with his family moved to Liverpool, Indiana.

In 1839 the legislature amended the law to allow the locating of a new county seat in Lake County, and in February, 1839, the five commissioners located the county seat at Liverpool and George Earle was appointed the first County Agent, to look after the property donated as consideration of the locating of the county seat at Liverpool.

Under the law, the county officers were not compelled to remove to Liverpool until suitable buildings had been erected for the county seat. A frame court house was started but never completed, and in 1840 a new locating commission was appointed to Crown Point and George Earle was continued as county agent.

In 1845, George Earle, having lost the county seat at Liverpool, took the Liverpool post office with him and moved to what is now Hobart. In 1849 he built the Town of

Hobart into a thriving town with a flour mill and other activities which go to make a lively community. It has been reported that deer were plentiful around there from 1843 to 1845 and, together with the Indians, added a rather picturesque appearance to that locality.

The first public school in Hobart was built in 1858, and was moved away in 1922, still in a good state of preservation, to be remodeled into a dwelling.

Hobart was at one time the head of the timber trade to Chicago from this region. In fact the Old Lake Street plank road in Chicago was built from lumber from Hobart and vicinity, and the first cedar block road in Chicago was built from blocks sawed in the Hobart mill.

George Earle, having Hobart well on its feet, next started Lake Station in 1852, and for a number of years it was a prosperous town, the terminus of the New Albany and Salem railroad (now Michigan Central). Here was located the shop and roundhouse of the railroad, and what was reported to be the finest railroad grounds in the country.

Lake Station is also the terminus of the Joliet "cutoff", a branch of the Michigan Central railroad running from Lake Station to Joliet, Illinois. After the burning down of the shops and roundhouse of the Michigan Central, the said railroad at that time having been built into Chicago over the Illinois Central railroad, the shops and roundhouse were not rebuilt in Lake Station and the town slowly went backwards, until 1908 when the name of the town was changed to East Gary and reincorporated as such.

In 1852 the hotel in Lake Station was opened and still stands there today. In 1878 the two-story school building was built and at present is remodeled into a two-story flat building.

George Earle removed to Philadelphia

about 1872, leaving his only son, John Earle, who moved to Chicago following the Chicago fire and went into the building business, which occupation he followed up to the time of his death in 1917.

George Earle always advised against the disposing of Section 24, or Liverpool, believing at some time a large city would be built at the foot of Lake Michigan, claiming that freight and the traveling public would not go north 30 miles to Chicago, and that the general travel being west, a city would be built at the mouth of the Calumet River. This idea has at least come true, through the location of Gary, although his idea was not in line with the largest steel producing center of the world, which we now have in Gary.

George Earle during his lifetime owned about 3000 acres of property in Lake County, all of which lies within the incorporation of the City of Gary, the City of Hobart, and the town of East Gary (formerly Lake Station). In naming the town of Hobart, he named it after his brother, Frederick Hobart Earle of Falmouth, England.

His profession was that of a builder, and during his lifetime he had made a collection of 300 pictures - many of them of his own paintings - which was kept in an art gallery in Hobart. At his death he left a large entailed estate, which is still held to cover a portion of his will. He left only one son, John C. Earle, who died in October, 1917, leaving as his only direct heirs, George and William Earle.



Hobart High School

This is the old Hobart High School. Photo courtesy of the Hobart Historical Society.